

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
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INFO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 370

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, IS
SUBJECT: HISTADRUT ELECTIONS SET FOR JUNE

SUMMARY: HISTADRUT ELECTIONS HAVE BEEN SET FOR JUNE 21 AND ITS CONGRESS IS TO TAKE PLACE IN EARLY SEPTEMBER. FOLLOWING THE MAY KNESSET ELECTIONS, THE HISTADRUT ELECTION CAMPAIGN, ALREADY IN HIGH GEAR, IS BOUND TO BE AFFECTED BY THE POWER STRUGGLE WITHIN THE LABOR PARTY, THE OUTCOME OF THE KNESSET ELECTION, AND THE FUTURE POSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT. WHILE A LABOR PARTY DOMINATED COALITION LED BY INCUMBENT SECRETARY GENERAL MESHEL APPEARS AS OF NOW LIKELY TO RETAIN CONTROL OF HISTADRUT, THE LABOR PARTY FACTION MAY LOSE ITS PRESENT MAJORITY. MOREOVER, A NUMBER OF BOTH STRUCTURAL AND PERSONALITY CHANGES ARE EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE AT THE NEXT CONGRESS. (END OF SUMMARY).

1. WITH THE DILEMMA OF WHETHER TO HOLD HISTADRUT ELECTIONS BEFORE OR AFTER THE KNESSET ELECTION RESOLVED (BY SETTING THE KNESSET ELECTIONS IN MAY) AND WITH THE LINKAGE BETWEEN THE FATE OF THE GOVERNMENT

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COALITION AND THE HISTADRUT LEADERSHIP THEREBY DIMINISHED, THE HISTADRUT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HAS NOW DECIDED TO HOLD THE HISTADRUT ELECTIONS ON JUNE 21. SECRETARY GENERAL YERUHAM MESHEL PREFERS AN EARLIER DATE (JUNE 14) BECAUSE HE FEARS THE LATER DATE MAY REDUCE VOTER PARTICIPATION DUE TO THE BEGINNING OF SUMMER VACATIONS. HOWEVER, HISTADRUT'S DAVAR OF

JANUARY 13 SPECULATES THAT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE APPROVAL OF JUNE 21 DATE IS LIKELY TO PREVAIL.

2. THE HISTADRUT ELECTION CAMPAIGN IS BOUND TO HAVE BROAD NATIONAL POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE IT WILL BE INVOLVED WITH BOTH THE PRE-LABOR PARTY CONVENTION MANEUVERS--RABIN'S STRUGGLE FOR RETAINING THE LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP--AND THE KNESSET ELECTION CAMPAIGN. NOT ONLY DO KEY HISTADRUT OFFICERS PLAY DUAL ROLES IN THE LABOR PARTY AND THE ALIGNMENT AS WELL AS IN HISTADRUT, BUT THEIR ORGANIZATION AFFECTS ECONOMIC POLICY AND SOCIAL SERVICES' DECISIONS AND WILL REFLECT THE DECISION OF MAPAM ON WHETHER TO REMAIN IN THE ALIGNMENT. HISTADRUT INSTITUTIONS--SUCH AS SOLEL BONEH, KUPAT HOLIM, AND THE SHIKUN OVDIM (HOUSING CORPORATION)--WHICH HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN ALLEGATIONS OF FINANCIAL SCANDALS WHICH DROVE HOUSING MINISTER OFER TO SUICIDE AND WHICH MAY ALSO AFFECT THE FUTURE OF OTHER CABINET MEMBERS, WILL BE IMPORTANT CAMPAIGN ISSUES.

3. SOME 1.3 MILLION MEMBERS, 20,000 MORE THAN IN 1973, CONSTITUTING A SUBSTANTIAL PART OF THE ISRAELI ELECTORATE--INCLUDING 90,000 ARABS--ARE EXPECTED TO VOTE. UNDER PRESENT RULES, THE WILL ELECT SOME 1,500 DELEGATES TO THE HISTADRUT CONVENTION, TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER; ALTHOUGH THERE IS NOW AN INTERNAL DEBATE ABOUT SUBSTANTIALLY ENLARGING THE NUMBER OF DELEGATES AS THE LABOR PARTY HAS DONE FOR ITS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UPCOMING CONVENTION. THE DELEGATES WILL BE ELECTED ON THE BASIS OF VOTES CAST FOR PARTY LISTS, WITH THE FINAL SELECTION OF DELEGATES TO BE DETERMINED ON A PROPORTIONAL BASIS ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF VOTES CAST FOR EACH PARTY. HIGH RANKING ON THE LISTS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE THIS ASSURES ELECTIONS OF KEY CANDIDATES. (AFFILIATED TRADE AND PROFESSIONAL UNIONS WILL SET THEIR OWN DATES FOR ELECTIONS AND CONVENTIONS AFTER THE HISTADRUT CONVENTION.) THE COALITION OF PARTIES CONSTITUTING THE POLICY MAKING EXECUTIVE BUREAU WILL BE DETERMINED ON THE BASIS OF AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE PARTY RECEIVING THE LARGEST NUMBER OF VOTES AND OTHER PARTIES READY TO SUPPORT IT.

4. ACCORDING TO HISTADRUT BYLAWS, THE CONVENTION WILL ELECT FROM ITS DELEGATES A 500 MEMBER NATIONAL COUNCIL WHICH, IN TURN, WILL ELECT A 167 MEMBER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, A 50 MEMBER CONTROL COMMISSION, A 22 MEMBER EXECUTIVE BUREAU, AND THE SECRETARY GENERAL.

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND THE CONTROL COMMISSION IS BASED ON THE SAME PROPORTIONAL BASIS AS THE DELEGATES TO THE CONVENTION-- ACCORDING TO THE VOTES FOR EACH PARTY LIST. THE EXECUTIVE BUREAU, HOWEVER, IS COMPOSED ONLY OF MEMBERS OF THE RULING COALITION AND THUS DOES NOT INCLUDE OPPOSITION MEMBERS. THE BUREAU APPOINTS THE HEADS OF THE HISTADRUT ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENTERPRISES (OVRAT HOVDIM) ON THE BASIS OF PARTY AFFILIATION.

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5. ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE MADE BY THE HISTADRUT ORGANIZATION DEPARTMENT HEADED BY AHARON HAREL (LABOR PARTY--EX-RAFI). KEY PROCEDURAL ISSUES YET TO BE RESOLVED ARE: A. THE NUMBER OF CONVENTION DELEGATES; B. A PROPOSAL THAT NO GROUP RECEIVING LESS THAN 1 PERCENT OF TOTAL VOTES SHOULD BE REPRESENTED IN THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OR RECEIVE A PROPORTIONAL SHARE OF FUNDS (THIS WOULD REDUCE THE 13 DIFFERENT PARTIES AND GROUPINGS WHICH ARE NOW REPRESENTED IN THE COUNCIL BY ELIMINATING SOME OF THE MILITANT RIGHT AND LEFT WING SPLINTER GROUPS, SUCH AS THE BLACK PANTHERS); C. THE QUESTION OF RANKING THE NAMES OF THE PARTY LISTS ACCORDING TO THE LEVELS OF POSITIONS TO WHICH THEY ASPIRE (THIS WOULD MAKE THE

HEAD OF THE PARTY LIST WITH THE LARGEST NUMBER OF
VOTES AUTOMATICALLY SECRETARY GENERAL AND WOULD AVOID
DESIGNATING KEY OFFICERS ON THE BASIS OF BACKROOM
MANEUVERS WITHOUT REGARD TO THE SUPPORT WHICH THEY
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MAY ENJOY); D. TIGHTER RULES GOVERNING THE CONDUCT
OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN SIMILAR TO THOSE APPLYING
TO KNESSET ELECTIONS; E. SIMPLIFICATION OF VERIFICATION
OF VOTER ELIBILITY ON THE BASIS OF DUES PAYMENT
RECORDS; F. ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT ELECTION COM-
MITTEE IN PLACE OF THE CURRENT PRACTICE OF
NOMINATING A NEW COMMITTEE FOR EACH ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

6. COMMENT: GIVEN THE SIZE OF THE HISTADRUT
ELECTORATE (CONSTITUTING A MAJOR PART OF THE GENERAL
ISRAELI ELECTORATE), THE OUTCOME OF THE KNESSET
ELECTIONS (WHICH WILL HAVE TAKEN PLACE A MONTH EARLIER)
AND THE FUTURE SHAPE OF THE LABOR PARTY ARE BOUND TO
AFFECT ALSO THE FUTURE COALITION RUNNING THE HISTADRUT.
THE ISSUE OF THE ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT OF THE ECONOMIC
AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SECTOR OF THE HISTADRUT IN THE
GROWING NUMBER OF SCANDALS IS ALSO LIKELY TO ASSUME
INCREASING IMPORTANCE AS THE CAMPAIGN ROLLS ON.
MESHEL'S HARDENING POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE GOVERNMENT
AND ESPECIALLY FINANCE MINISTER RABINOWITZ ON CUH
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES AS SUBSIDIES, MORE EQUIT-
ABLE TAXATION AND PROTECTION OF WELFARE AND PENSION
BENEFITS BY MEANS OF LINKAGE WITH THE COST OF LIVING,
IS LIKELY TO ASSURE HIM RE-ELECTION DESPITE THE CON-
TINUING EROSION OF RANK AND FILE CONFIDENCE IN HISTADRUT
LEADERSHIP. HOWEVER, THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE CONSIDERABLE
PERSONNEL CHANGES IN THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND BUREAU
AND AMONG THE HEADS OF THE VARIOUS HISTADRUT DEPARTMENTS.
THERE IS ALSO LIKELY TO BE AN ARAB MEMBER INCLUDED
IN THE 22 MEMBER EXECUTIVE BUREAU. MAPAM'S DECISION
WHETHER TO REMAIN WITHIN THE HISTADRUT ALIGNMENT
WILL BE DETERMINED BY ITS DECISION RE CONTINUING
THE ALIGNMENT WITH THE LABOR PARTY IN THE KNESSET
ELECTION. SHOULD MAPAM DECIDE TO CONTINUE IN THE
ALIGNMENT, THE LATTER IS LIKELY TO RETAIN ITS MAJORITY
IN THE HISTADRUT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND NATIONAL
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COUNCIL. HOWEVER, IT IS NO LONGER CERTAIN THAT THE
LABOR PARTY BY ITSELF WILL BE ABLE TO PRESERVE ITS

PRESENT MAJORITY IN BOTH BODIES.

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